

Please disregard the ATTACHMENT in the previous e-mail and use the comment contained in the body of that e-mail as the wording differed slightly.

I am resending the same corrected comment in this e-mail. Heather

May 25, 2003

To: Bureau of Land Management

Re: Little Canyon Mountain Project

Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impacts for the Little Canyon Mountain Fuel Reduction Project

From: Heather Sheedy

Little Canyon Mountain is very familiar to me as I have spent considerable time in the area during the past 40-plus years and lived on the mountain for a time. My family, great uncle, Ike Gucker located and worked gold mines in the area and lived in cabins on the mountain beginning in the mid-1800s. My grandparents, George and Lola Sand, lived on the mountain intermittently between 1935 until the early 1970s. Today, my family continues to own property at the top of Little Canyon Mountain. Along with many others, I join the effort to remedy the hazardous condition of the forest in the 2,500-acre area managed by the Bureau of Land Management.

On Page 29, Chapter 2, three objectives are listed with Number 3 the best choice in my view – to restore a sustainable structure and function. As far as the alternatives, Alternative A, the do-nothing option is unacceptable as well as the unreasonable restrictions in Alternative B. Alternative C, to return to historic conditions would be detrimental as it would obliterate most of the forest growth in the area in order to return to the nearly barren status of the 1900s circa. The progress of the establishment of trees in the area should be nurtured and maintained.

Alternative F best addresses the most site-specific stand treatment. And perhaps portions of D,E and F could be pulled together for a better plan. Nothing less than a comprehensive management approach is acceptable, beginning with the removal of all the dead and obviously dying trees, regardless of size. Ground removal using equipment is recommended where possible and helicopter removal in the steeper terrain. And merchantable timber should be salvaged and milled. The astronomical expense BLM representatives hinted about for the recent thinning should point to the need for harvesting and sale of damaged and dying trees that still have value to help pay the expense of the thinning. Time is of the essence in getting the job done as the threat of fire, especially from lightning-caused crown fires, is fast approaching again. Disease and blight will only continue to spread to the healthy trees until the problem is removed. I also recommend constant active management of the BLM-managed forest land in the future. Discussions have hinted that once the a thinning is done that nothing much would need to be done for 10 years or more. Indications also point to the likely possibility that more infected trees will continue to die and need to be removed in the next year ... or sooner. Prompt attention to the problem and appropriate action will alleviate further devastation.

During a tour of the project after the initial thinning of young trees, I was very disappointed to see the contracted work, apparently performed to BLM's specifications, left in such a hazardous condition. Although the area was heavily thinned, somewhat addressing an immediate ladder fuels and ground-fire threat on a relatively small percentage of the 2,500 acres, it isn't hard to imagine what the effects will be when the huge piles of slash are burned, if they are left to remain within a few short feet of the remaining live small trees. Those trees will obviously be scorched and die should those piles be burned. The piles, if left through another hot summer season also will pose a fire threat – lightning strike or human caused. In questioning my brothers and son, who work in the woods, they burn throughout their thinning/logging projects by mixing the green and dead debris. Most of the BLM-contacted piles overwhelmingly consist of green wood.

I oppose any major improvements to the road leading up to the trailhead of the Canyon Mountain Trail as that would undoubtedly increase traffic and allow for more opportunities for trespass on private property, vandalism and damage. I also am especially opposed to changing the road from its historic route as such a change would destroy the historic record. Would the Oregon Trail be changed? (I am aware that permission has already been sought from Jim Haight to use rock from the Iron King Mine for the road work.). Even at that, the expense for the type of roadwork – major excavation – in my estimation makes the proposed "new road" project unreasonable. Aren't we in hard economic times? One reason stated for moving the road was that runoff muddies Little Pine Creek. I disagree with the statement as I also lived in that area and do not recall that being a problem. There are apparently plans for numerous road closures – 33 segments – which would undoubtedly interfere with miners' rights to access. Although I would be in favor to establish limits for four-wheelers and motorcycles, who often travel off the established trails/roads. The proposed riparian buffer, which would not remove the thick, dense, dying and dead trees already there, also poses a hazard for the several homes located downstream.

Concerning the "pit" area, a "non-treatment" buffer would, in my opinion, be a detrimental. It is only sensible to remove dead, dying and diseased trees within that area also. While a clean-up of trash and dumped items will be addressed, the establishment of a more defined "recreation" area will probably bring in more users and will most definitely require better policing. In addition to the pit area, several areas within the 2,500-acre study area have been used, unchecked, as party spots for years. And improvements (four-wheel and dirt bike trails, shooting range, hiking paths and or the main road) will undoubtedly attract more use. I am sure most people will be in favor in development of this area for multiple-use and recreational use. Along with this development comes more hazard – traffic, fire, noise, partying, vandalism, drug and alcohol use. Are you willing to provide better policing protection of that area?

I am hopeful that all of these issues will be taken into consideration.

Sincerely,
Heather Sheedy